NSW REC NEWSLETTER

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Latest news from the REC

The REC welcomes the following new member organisations that are involved in linear reserve environmental management across NSW:

- Local Land Services
- Country Rail Network
- Ausgrid
- Sydney Trains

Guides to roadside vegetation management produced

In addition to carrying out their legislative requirements, local councils are encouraged to take a more proactive approach to roadside environmental management. This approach involves the use of Roadside Vegetation Management Plans (RVMPs) or similar. These plans enable the identification of important roadside environments and coordinated strategies to conserve them. This holistic planning approach means that the risks to the important natural assets are understood and better managed.

The REC recently produced guides for local councils seeking to achieve best practice in roadside environmental management through the use of RVMPs. The guidelines will also be of relevance to managers of other linear reserves which, by nature of their shape and issues, have similar management requirements.

The RVMP guides cover the four stages that lead to best practice in roadside environmental management:
1. Assessment
2. Planning
3. Implementation
4. Monitoring and evaluation
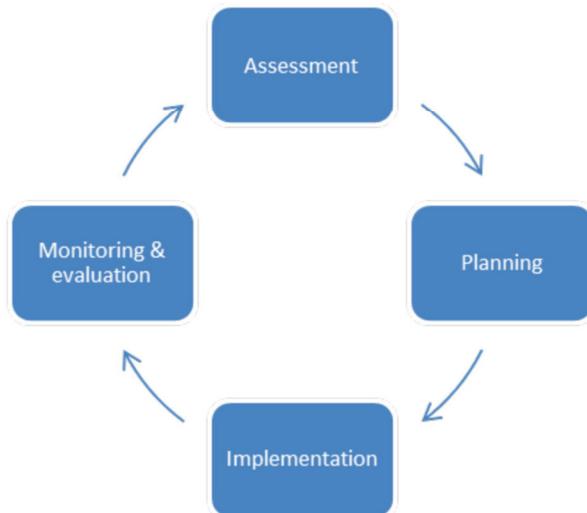
The four stages in best practice roadside environmental management

The four guides are available on the REC website at
http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/environment/downloads/managing_road sides.html

Funding to produce the guides was provided by the NSW Environmental Trust.

Significant Roadside Environment Area signs mapped

Many projects funded through the NSW Environmental Trust's Roadside Environment Implementation Program (RVIP) included the installation of signage to identify their significant roadside environment areas (SREAs). A total of 196 signs have been installed through RVIP1 and more are expected to be reported on in RVIP2.

The locations of these signs have been mapped using a google maps platform, an accessible and freely available program to all councils. The map can be updated by councils for their own purposes, including contributing additional data and interpretative information, photos, or species and other management information.

The NSW map of SREA signage installed through RVIP1 is now available publically at
https://mapsengine.google.com/map/viewer?mid=z7_PAe1deA0o.klTdy6JGZJRY&hl=en

All councils contributing information have been provided with maps of their local areas and a guideline with step-by-step information on how to produce their own maps or add more information. The process developed will enable the management of a database of SREA signs for future reference and use, and enable these details to be provided to the project funding body, the NSW Environmental Trust.

More information is available from Kirsty McIntyre, Project Manager RVIP at
kirsty.mcintyre@lgnsw.org.au or (02) 9242 4055.

The Australasian Network for Ecology and Transport (ANET) Conference
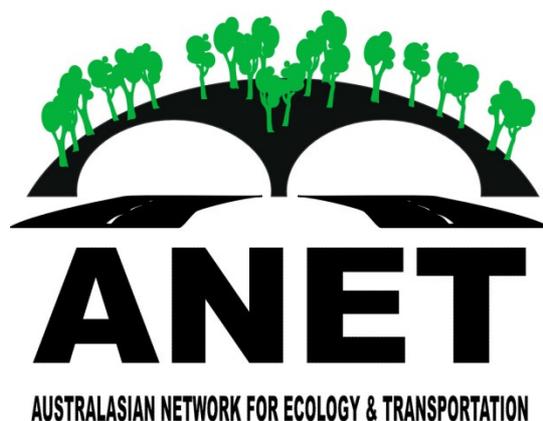
ANET is a professional network for all people involved in the planning, design, construction, maintenance and research of linear infrastructure and the environment.

Roads, railways and utility easements are conspicuous and pervasive components of almost all landscapes around the world. The impacts of linear infrastructure and the vehicles they carry are considerable and are responsible for the mortality of hundreds of thousands of animals each year, the decline of populations and disruption to ecosystem function. Road ecology is a relatively new discipline that aims to understand impacts and offer strategies and approaches to avoid, minimise, mitigate and offset these impacts.

ANET will hold its inaugural conference on **20-23 July 2014** in Coffs Harbour, New South Wales. The conference will be an excellent opportunity to learn more and share your experiences with others.

Key Dates:
7 April 2014 - Symposia proposals due
12 May 2014 - Abstracts due

Further program and conference registration information will be posted on the ANET website www.ecoltrans.net

ANET focuses on the Australasian region but is open to anyone from around the globe. To register you or your organisation's interest in becoming a part of ANET, please email info@ecoltrans.net.

Plenary speakers: Professor John Altringham, from the University of Leeds in the UK, and Professor Andrew Bennett, from Deakin University Melbourne, will be giving what promise to be engaging talks.

Field trip: We will visit sites along the Pacific Highway that demonstrate the evolution in best-practice road planning, design and mitigation in New South Wales and Australia, including fencing, underpasses, land bridges, glider poles, and canopy bridges.

Videos of roadside environmental management by local councils

Three video case studies have been produced highlighting the outcomes of the Roadside Vegetation Implementation Project funded by the NSW Environmental Trust.

Palerang Council – Oallen Road Restoration Project

The Oallen Roadside Restoration project improved the ecological condition, extent and connectivity of native vegetation along the Oallen Road, Palerang. Oallen Road includes largely undisturbed forest connecting several national parks, however historical pine plantations in the area and heavy traffic between the coast and central NSW have introduced a range of weeds that threaten the corridor, endangered ecological community and threatened species. Watch the video case study at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2SHBo0a6Dg

Bathurst Regional Council – Protecting and Connecting the Bathurst Copper Butterfly Habitat

Bathurst Regional Council used its grant funding to improve the habitat and therefore increase the population of the Copper Butterfly – an endangered and high-profile species in the region. Bathurst Regional Council removed 90% of weeds across 26 km of road to help the species flourish. Watch the video case study at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2I0eEaZL7M

Hunter Councils – Conservation of Weeping Myall Populations in Roadsides

Singleton, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Shire Councils undertook a joint regional project to undertake weed control works and implement a marker scheme to identify significant areas of Weeping Myall and give guidance on their management. The project addressed issues of remnant vegetation, threatened species and erosion, thereby regenerating sites recognised as matters of national environmental significance. Watch the video case study at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O80-_rfl1Bc

NRM on Farms

'NRM on Farms' is a monthly news summary about climate and natural resources in agriculture. The May 2014 edition includes information on:
- The seasonal weather outlook for NSW
- Ecological grazing and fire management
- Trust is the key in bushfire planning
- Soil fertility dictates forest carbon sequestration
- Paddock guide to greenhouse gas emissions
- eSPADE: NSW soil maps online
- Pest suppressive landscapes
- Crown Lands proposal to streamline eight Acts
- Economic benefits of windbreaks

To subscribe to NRM on Farms, email Rebecca Lines-Kelly at rebecca.lines-kelly@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Native Vegetation Management Reforms

The NSW Government is reforming native vegetation management in NSW to deliver multiple benefits and attempt to strike the right balance between efficient agricultural management and protect the environment.

So far
Last year the NSW Government created a new *Native Vegetation Regulation 2013,* created new clearing exemptions and allowed for the creation of self-assessable codes for low risk clearing activities.

First three draft self-assessable native vegetation codes – on exhibition
The Government has recently placed the first three draft self-assessable codes for clearing under the *NSW Native Vegetation Act 2003* on public exhibition. The draft codes are another step in implementing the Government's reforms. The draft codes are for: clearing invasive native species, clearing isolated paddock trees in a cultivated area and thinning of native vegetation.

These codes place trust in landholders to manage their properties sustainably while maintaining environmental standards. The codes cover low risk clearing activities and can remove the requirement for a Property Vegetation Plan (PVP) in some areas. There are circumstances where the codes will not apply, such as high risk clearing activities involving native vegetation near rivers and creeks or threatened species where PVPs will remain a requirement.

The codes will be supported by ongoing education and compliance by the Office of Environment and Heritage to prevent illegal clearing. At the same time the NSW Government, through Local Land Services, will continue to provide extension services, advice and assistance to landholders on native vegetation management and the new self-assessable codes.

Submissions will be received up to **Monday 26 May 2014**.

You can see the draft self-assessable codes, FAQs, supporting documents and Have your say at: http://engage.environment.nsw.gov.au/NativeVegetation

Next steps
The next steps in the Government's reform agenda include more self-assessable codes later this year, new PVP assessment rules, and modernising the state's biodiversity legislation.

More information
For more information about native vegetation management please visit the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage website at:
http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/

Subscription to NV updates
You are receiving this email because you are registered to receive native vegetation email or letter updates, including notification of consultation documents, announcements and whenever we publish anything in which you may have an interest. To subscribe or unsubscribe, please email:
native.vegetation@environment.nsw.gov.au or call 131 555.

Draft biodiversity offset policy for major projects

The NSW Government has also recently released the State's new draft biodiversity offsets policy for major projects. The approach includes a transparent method for assessing a major project's biodiversity impacts and offset requirements. The policy will also allow for the establishment of a biodiversity offsets fund. When established, the fund will allow contributions to be made at a landscape scale instead of locating and purchasing individual offsets on a farm scale. Importantly, there will be opportunities under the policy for landowners to benefit from offsetting and generate income through voluntary conservation management on their land.

The call for submissions has recently closed.

You can see the draft policy, FAQs, supporting documents at: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biodivoffsets/bioffsetspol.htm

Crown Lands Management Review

The Crown Estate in NSW represents approximately 33 million hectares. This is about 42% of the State and is valued at approximately $11 billion. This area does not include national parks and state forests.

The majority of Crown land is in the Western Division of NSW representing around 30 million hectares and around 6,500 Western Lands leases.

The Crown Estate is made up of 580,000 individual parcels of land including travelling stock reserves.

As part of the NSW Government's commitment to cutting red tape and updating legislation to improve outcomes, a comprehensive review into the management of Crown land has been completed. The Review started in June 2012, with the aim of improving management of Crown land and increasing the benefits and returns from Crown land to the community. The Review report is available at http://www.lpma.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/196433/Crown_lands_Management_Review_accessible.pdf

The Review report has been considered by Government and the Government's response to the report is now available at http://www.lpma.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/196435/Crown_Lands_for_the_Future_accessible.pdf

The Crown Lands Legislation White Paper contains proposals to develop one new piece of legislation that will replace eight existing Acts, streamline existing provisions, simplify the management of Crown reserves and reduce red tape. The White Paper is available at http://www.lpma.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/196434/Crown_Lands_White_paper_accessible.pdf

Comments are welcome on the White Paper and will be open until **20 June 2014** at 5pm. For more information about the White paper and how to make a submission, go to http://www.lpma.nsw.gov.au/crown_lands/comprehensive_review_of_nsw_crown_land_management/crown_lands_legislation_white_paper

Road underpasses and wildlife

(excerpt from 'Roads and Wildlife A Review of Purpose-Built Fauna Underpasses' prepared for the City of Armadale (SA) by M.J. and A.R. Bamford Consulting Ecologists)

Even though roads are known barriers to the natural movement and dispersal of wildlife, there have been few studies conducted specifically focusing on the effects of roads on fauna. Fauna underpasses are increasingly being seen as a useful tool to maintain connectivity between fragmented habitat, however, to date, there has been few long term Australian studies published on their effectiveness.

From the work that has been carried out it is clear that wildlife will use these structures if placed in appropriate locations. Most commonly, box culverts and buried arch tunnels are used as fauna underpasses; however, authors do not often differentiate between the two, making a comparison on effectiveness difficult. Determining the type of structure best suited to a particular application will ultimately depend on:
- the range of species requiring access
- cost of the structure
- what materials are available
- site conditions.

Many authors have speculated about the incidence of predation within underpasses. While no direct evidence of this has been recorded, it is clear that introduced predators, such as foxes, are regular users of these structures.

If wildlife passages are to be used successfully, then fox control must be considered as an essential management tool. Baiting of remnant vegetation in the vicinity of underpasses may assist in controlling predators, thus reducing the chance of predation. In addition to widespread baiting, it may be appropriate to place tethered baits within underpasses so that introduced species such as foxes can actively be controlled if they become regular users the structure.

Leading authors in the field of wildlife underpasses such as Clevenger and Waltho have suggested that wildlife underpasses should not be built species-specific because of the potential effects on other taxa. This essentially means that underpasses should be constructed to help facilitate the potential movement of all recognised species in the area.

To aid in achieving this goal, the authors have recommended the following be incorporated in the structure design. Underpasses should:
- be placed at locations well-used by fauna
- have vegetation at both ends of the underpass
- have the sky-line visible from both ends
- contain cover inside, in the form of logs/branches (otherwise known as furniture)
- be located away from human activity
- maximise openness ratio.

June webinar series: advances in weed management

ICAN Pty Ltd will be hosting a series of GRDC-sponsored national webinars on weed management topics in June 2014.

The webinars are targeted at grain growers and advisers.

Jump on your laptop or PC on Tuesday afternoons to link into a short 30 minute presentation from industry experts in their field, which will be followed by approximately 15 minutes for questions.

Start times for the webinars are Western Australia 1.00 pm; South Australia 2.30 pm; Qld, NSW, Vic, Tas 3.00 pm.

Webinars are free of charge, however participants will be required to pre-register for the webinar(s) of interest to receive a link to the webinar software.

Of particular interest to linear reserve managers is the webinar on Tuesday 10 June: 'Weed control on paddock boundaries and fence lines'.

To register for an upcoming webinar please click on the title below or visit http://icanrural.com.au/iwm.html for further information.

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The aim of this newsletter is to share information about the management of NSW linear reserve environments and profile the NSW Roadside Environment Committee (REC). For more information on the REC, including how to develop roadside vegetation management plans, go to:
http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/environment/roadsideenvironcommittee/

Please contact the REC Executive Officer (details below) if you wish to subscribe or unsubscribe.

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